



OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

Digital India stands for transforming India into a digitally empowered knowledge economy. It is an initiative of government of India to integrate the Government Departments and the people of India. It aims at ensuring that the Government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paper work. This paper attempts to highlight the different challenges faced by the Digital India Programme. It describes the different opportunities of the programme for the people of the country.

KEYWORDS: Digital India, Challenges, opportunities.

1. Introduction:

India, a union of states, is the second most populous nation in the Asian region behind China. The country has achieved impressive progress in the field of science and technology and is emerging as one of the strongest economies in the developing world. Information and communication technologies have brought significant changes in the development of the Indian society through information dissemination¹.

Digital India programme is the outcome of the changes brought by the information and communication technology. Digital India is an innovative thought of Mr Narendra Modi's government. It is an initiative of government of India to integrate the government Departments and the people of India. It aims at ensuring that the Government services are made available to citizens electronically by reducing paper work. The initiative also includes plan to connect rural areas with high speed internet networks. It is an initiative to transform the country into digitally empowers knowledge economy. The programme weaves together a large number of ideas and thought into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen a part of larger goal. It is coordinated by Deity, implemented by the entire government- both at the centre and state. Electronic commerce refers to wide range of online business activities for products and services⁸. E-commerce is the use of electronic communications and digital information processing technology in business transactions to create, transform and redefine relationships for value creation between organizations and individuals⁹.

The project aims to connect the 2.5 lakh villages across India through broadband highways, public internet access, universal access to mobile connectivity, e-governance,¹⁰ *e-kranti*,¹³ information for all, a robust electronic manufacturing regime, early harvest programmes, and IT for jobs—known as the nine pillars of Digital India. The cost of this project is estimated at Rs 1,13,000 crore. The Digital India Advisory Group will be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and monitored by the Prime Minister and his office. For the Digital India initiative, the original design and programme content of the e-governance project have been distinctly improved upon⁶.

1.1 Vision of Digital India

The vision of digital India is centered on three key areas. They are as follows:

- Digital infrastructure as a utility which seeks to provide every citizen with high speed internet facility, a cradle to grave internet identity, mobile phone and bank account, access to common service centre, sharable private space on a public cloud and safe and secure cyberspace.
- Governance and services on demand which will be available in real time for online and mobile platforms, seamlessly integrated across departments and jurisdictions. All citizen documents to be made available on the cloud platform; as a result, citizens will not be asked to produce such documents for availing services. In addition, the provision of cashless electronic transactions will help generate business. Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will be integrated with the development schemes.
- Empower citizens, especially rural citizens, by making them digitally literate. This will be done through collaborative digital platforms and by making available the digital resources in their native language with a view to making their participation a reality. It will help tap into the data that will be freely available on the cloud computing platform— independent of an intervention.

1.2 Projects under Digital India Programme

Under digital India programme the Government of India has undertaken some projects⁷. These projects are as follows:

- a) Digital locker system of the digital India programme will help citizens to digitally store their important documents like pan card, passport, mark sheets and degree certificates. It will help to minimize the usage of physical documents and will provide secure access to Government issued documents.
- b) Another key projects under Digital India programme is My gov.in which has been implemented as platform for citizen engagement in governance, through a "Discuss, Do and Disseminate" approach.
- c) Swachh Bharat Mission Mobile App is one of the projects of Digital India programme which will help the people and the government organization for achieving the goal of Swachh Bharat Mission.
- d) e- Sign framework would allow citizens to digitally sign a document online using Aadhar Authentication.
- e) Online registration system under the e- Hospital application has been introduced. This application provides important services such as online registration, payment of fees and appointment, online diagnostic reports, enquiring availability of blood online etc.
- f) National scholarship portal which will put an end to elongated scholarship process.
- g) The Government of India has undertaken an initiative namely Bharat Net, a high speed digital highway to connect all 2.5 gram panchayats of the country. This would be the world's largest rural broadband connectivity project using optical fibre.
- h) BSNL has introduced Next Generation Network, to replace 30 years old exchanges, which is an IP based technology to manage all types of services like voice, data, multimedia/video and other types of packet switched communication services.

2. Objectives of the study:

The paper has the following objectives:

- (i) To Study the concept of Digital India Programme.
- (ii) To study the opportunities of the programme for the people of the country.
- (iii) To study the various challenges faced by the Digital India Programme in its implementation

3. Methodology:

An attempt has been made in this study to analyze the secondary data available in the field of study.

4.0 Analysis of the Objectives

4.1 Concept of Digital India Programme :

Digital India programme is consisting of nine pillars³. They are as follows

(i) Broadband Highways : it contains

- Broadband for all rural: it will cover 250,000GP and its expected time line is December 2016.
- Broadband for urban: Virtual network operator for service delivery and mandate communication infrastructure on new urban development and buildings.
- National information infrastructure: this programme is integration of SWAN, NKN, NOPN.

(ii) Universal access to phones: The expected time for this is FY2014-18.**(iii) Public internet access programme:** Under this programme the post offices becomes multi service centres.**(iv) E-governance reforming government through technology:** This pillar includes Government business process Re-engineering using IT to improve transaction and Electronic databases in which all data bases and information to be effective not manual.**(v) E-kranti electronic delivery of services:** E-Kranti will include technology for education, technology for health, technology for planning, technology for farmers, technology for security, technology for financial inclusion and technology for justice.**(vi) Information for all:** it will include online hosting of information & document. Government pro-actively engages through social media and web based platform to inform citizens about MyGov.in and 2 way communications between citizens and government and online messaging to citizens on special occasions/programmes.**(vii) Electronic manufacturing target net zero import:** Under this pillar the focus areas are Fabs, Fab-less design, set-top boxes, Vsats, mobiles, consumers and medical, electronics, smart energy meters, smart cards, micro –ATM.**(viii) It for jobs:** It will include train people in smaller towns and villages for IT sector jobs, train service delivery agents to run viable business delivery IT services, telecom service providers to train work force to cater to their own needs.**(ix) Early harvest programmes:** IT platform for messages, Government greetings to be E-greetings and Biometric attendance.**4.2 Opportunities of Digital India Programme**

Though Digital India programme has faced many challenges in its implementation but it has some prospects which are mentioned below –

1. It would bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of Government services electronically.
2. Digital India programme will put an end to corruption system which becomes the main feature of the country.
3. Digital India programme aims to reduce paper work which will help to save trees & protect environment.
4. National scholarship portal, a project under Digital India, will put an end to scholarship process right from submission of student's application, verification, sanction and disbursement to end beneficiary for all scholarships provided by The Government of India.
5. It benefits people of India in every village in terms of knowledge improve by using internet in day to day life.⁵
6. Each person will be having bank account.

4.3 Challenges of Digital India:

As the initiative is new, it is obvious that the programme will face many challenges⁶. Some of the challenges which may create problem in its implementation are as follows

- a) India is a diversified country in terms of culture. Each state has its own specific language, customs, food habits, laws and traditions. Digital India programme aims to integrate the whole country digitally. Complete integration that is integration of technology and language is one of the main challenges the mission would face in its implementation.
- b) There are different internet protocols in different states depending on what kind of hardware and software they implement and chances are that might lead to connectivity glitches. Hence there must be some sort of a directive to standardize all the software protocols.
- c) Digital India aims to transform the country into a digitally empowered knowledge economy. It is not an easy task. It needs coordination and cooperation

of all the government Departments. Without the smooth teamwork between the departments the mission would never be implemented to its full strength.

- d) Public internet access is one of the pillars of Digital India programme. But in India, poverty and illiteracy stands as major obstacles in internet access. High illiteracy rate act as a major road block in expanding the reach of internet.
- e) We live in a world where internet and cyber-crime are inseparable enemies. The entire architecture should be designed in such a way that there is proper authentication done of all the documents put online by citizens and it is available to the right users at any time they want with the right authentication. In order to ensure the cyber security the country should have privacy norms.
- f) National Optical fiber network ensures broadband reaches in every nook and corner of the country. But to reach broadband connection country wide is not an easy task.

5.0 Conclusion:

Government will do well to take into account the recommendation of the council on Digital Government strategies as entrusted in the OECD 2013 Ministerial Council Meeting while considering the agenda on “trust in Government: evidence, policies and decision making” at this stage of implementation of Digital India programme.

The programme, which has been conceived at the behest of the highest level in political hierarchy, foresees inter-ministerial co-operation and collaboration towards the outline priorities with the expectation that relevant agencies across levels of Government would engage themselves in pursuing the Digital India agenda.

The elements of the Digital India programme accommodate all of the recommendation of the OECD referred above. So in the theoretical framework, the Digital India programme will be a state of the art network. How far the strategy would yield result in meeting the desired objectives would largely depend on factors which are outside the realm of technologies and tools for digitization.

These are rooted in the organization maturity and commitment of the systems within the government and also dependent on public support, overcoming the shackles of historical and cultural traits and the installed wisdom which feels threatened with the transformation that will sweep them off their feet.

For successful implementation of Digital India Programme involves lot of hindrances but in the present global context there is no second thought. Therefore it is highly expected to expedite the initiation of the digital India Programme.

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